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Oxford May /87

The subject which has been chosen for me to talk about is such a very big one that I don't intend to waste a moment more than I can help on anything superfluous, either by way of preface or in generalities; but I can't ~~help~~ help saying I am a little sorry to be obliged to do a thing which falls too much to the lot of purveyors of Musical history and discourse to you to a great extent about dry bones. [sic] I always much prefer living art to the relics and dried up remains of immature experiments & dead formulas, and I heartily ~~it~~ long for other people to do the same. But as we have to do with the gradual development of an art it is impossible to begin in the middle. The utmost we can do is to take up the thread of the story at the point where our particular branch of art begins to be clearly distinguished from the general chaos, and when differentiation marks a distinct and definite new departure. And unluckily the subject is

The subject such a very big one that I must not waste any time on prefaces – but at the same time I must say a word to explain why I must of necessity spend so much time on matters which may appear to you little better than dry bones. I have no taste for dry bones myself & no desire for anyone else to have it; but under certain circumstances one is obliged to allow



such a big one that it will be impossible for me to do more than sketch the history from its beginnings up to the first great climax of Oratorio in Handel & Bach – which indeed is its greatest climax, for our later form is merely a revival ~~and~~ under changed & enlarged conditions. But this piece of early art history is necessarily rather an intellectual than an artistic or aesthetic study; & the pleasures which can be got out of it are such as arise from the contemplation of a continuous & very successful voyage of discovery on the part of the human mind into a totally unknown land; & the development of new powers and the gradual mastery of new effects; and the gradual perfecting of a great form of art under limitations and conditions which only made themselves known as ~~the~~ each successive experimenter or adventurer made his step forward into the unknown from the place which the highest efforts of his predecessor attained to. The analogies which such a study presents are extremely attractive but I know I must not spend time on them but come as quickly as possible to practical discussion of the matter in hand.

Oratorio a Musical setting of a ~~sacred story~~ on the  
fullest scale as possible of a story or subject  
connected in some way with religion or sacred  
history.

Comparison with Opera not only very natural but very  
serviceable as it draws attention to the points  
involved in the Artistic problems to be solved.

In Opera the mind is engaged with other things  
besides the Music.

But first of all we must clearly have some idea of what an Oratorio really is. No complete definition seems possible; but in general our impressions amount to make us think of an Oratorio as a subject taken from Sacred history and thrown into a dramatic, or sometimes epic form, and set to Music with all the resources of Musical effect available. It is inevitable that we should compare it with Opera: & we shall understand its nature & condition better if we do. Oratorio as we know it in the last 200 years differs from Opera mainly in the absence of acting and scenery; & this entails very great & essential differences in the nature of the Art form. In Opera a great part of peoples attention is taken up with what affects them through their eyes, and they listen to the Music under the exciting influence of dramatic situations presented to them with the most vivid power of stage presentation. Hence the Music in Opera has come to be very closely wedded to the subject; & its whole character & the nature of its form has been gradually changed by the closeness of the connection; and to it has developed a freedom of design & structure

In Oratorio the things outside Music ~~by~~ are little more  
than slightly suggestive.

Forms need to be more nearly complete.

No danger of hindering action.

of colour & orchestral effect which is not suitable to any other branch of Musical art. In Oratorio absence of the scenic condition leaves the mind much less impressed with the subject. That is if the mind realises the subject at all it is rather in short episodes & not in that great sweep of continuity which holds us spell bound to the development of the story in a first rate drama. Consequently in Oratorio the Music requires to be much more ~~austere~~ formally definite & much more self dependant. It has a ~~closer~~ connection with near affinity & likeness to the abstract forms of pure instrumental art; & the subdivisions into ~~it~~ complete separate numbers, & even a certain amount of repetition & formality of structure is not so much out of place. In ~~it~~ Oratorio there is no danger of ~~hampering~~ & hindering the action or hampering a situation by ~~it~~ dwelling long on successive points; but rather the contrary. For it is scarcely possible in such a form as Oratorio to take in the situation without some dwelling on its salient features. So that the development of complete forms of Chorus, Air,

In Opera things have to be learnt by heart;  
consequently the degree of difficulty & complexity in  
the Choral writing is restricted.

Hence the points we have to look for in the. earlier  
development of Oratorio, are the development of  
musical & dramatic expression, the development of  
form & the development of Choral writing.

Quartett, and so forth has been rather likely to be intensified than glossed over.

The second main point of difference is that in Opera everything has to be learnt by heart for the sake of the dramatic representation. Consequently we cannot have very elaborate choruses. In this line composers are limited to simple & obvious kinds of choral writing, which get their effect chiefly from the situations. In Oratorio there are no stage situations, and there is nothing to help out deficiencies of interest, & there is no excuse for the composer in the fact that the Music has to be learnt by heart; so it has naturally come about that the favourable opportunity for grand Choral effect in Oratorio has made it imperative. The sort of Chorus which is inevitable in Opera is intolerable in Oratorio; & Choral effect being the grandest & noblest available in such circumstances Choruses have become the most salient feature in Oratorio, & that which puts it in the highest degree of contrast with Opera. In Oratorio chorus is the back bone & centre of Musical interest, in Opera it is always secondary & incidental. Hence in modern times In the beginning Opera & Oratorio were very

Mysteries & miracle plays.

And the manner in which Music was introduced into  
them.

[Illeg] = plays

A play consisting of dialogue between St John & Mary  
after the Crucifixion



closely connected. They ~~prop~~ probably sprang from the same sources. The mysteries and Miracle plays which were used with so much effect to teach the stories in the bible were helped out with music even in very early times. The priests naturally used all the means in their power to make such plays attractive to the vulgar, and ~~it~~ Music having always played an important part in religious ceremonies of all kinds was ~~most~~ readily available and most appropriate. A fair number of examples of such works in which Music was introduced are still extant, & accounts of many more are preserved. The performances went on in all countries, France, Italy, Germany, England alike, & from the eleventh century onwards records of them are tolerably constant. The Music seems to have come in in a fragmentary kind of way in the course of the dialogue. In some early examples the actors ~~evidently~~ broke into song in the middle of ~~dialogue~~ their speeches in a very picturesque fashion. Sometimes the ~~song~~ portion which was sung was in Latin and the dialogue in the vernacular. If the circumstances were the same as in performances in our own time & we take our standard from our own familiar impressions this would of course ~~by~~ have rather a crude & fragmentary effect; but we must remember the difference between such a proceeding now & then. Then they had only melodic effects. There was no accompaniment at all; the transition from declamatory speech to song was instantaneous. The performer had not to wait

Introduction of Music into the Mysteries & Miracle  
plays.

Tunes: chorus passages

The Choral parts not in a popular form at first; but  
contrapuntal.

for the instruments to tune up; & or for any preparatory ritornels, he passed from the indefinite intonation of speech to the definite intonation of Song at certain crises, & brought them into prominence. At first Music was limited to short points of melody here & there for single voices - & the melodies themselves varied from ecclesiastical forms & hymn tunes to respectable secular tunes. For the church in those days welcomed secular tunes without fear. It was in the nature of things that as music expanded in other places it should also come to take a more prominent position in these sacred plays; and in the course of time passages for choruses were introduced as well as the short bits of melody for single voices. These passages for chorus appear to have been on the same lines as the other high class Choral music. There was little or no attempt to give the audience a chance to join in, or to give the choruses a familiar & taking character. The Choruses were in what is described in modern times a Madrigal form. That is polyphonic and contrived with elaborately free motion of the separate voice parts, polyphonically; with no tune to catch the ear; but possibly imitative passages something like in principle to our familiar figures, though without the distinct proposition of musical subject, & the answer. To such a state of things composers were necessarily limited by the undeveloped

To illustrate counterpoint take Lasso's 'Intellectum  
tibi dabo'

Date of Lasso's birth not known  
early 16<sup>th</sup> century  
died at Munich in 1594

Ideas of counterpoint precluded a feeling for a  
harmonic system as long as the modes were  
unchanged

condition of their art; & such was the system of Musical treatment in some of the early attempts at secular stage plays as well as the Sacred performances; ~~Such~~ ~~as~~ the subjects of which remind us so of our modern Oratorios – Such as “The Conversion of St Paul” (Rome 1440), Abraham and Isaac Florence 1449. Abel & Cain (1554) The Prodigal Son (1565).

But now in order to understand the revolution which started both Opera & Oratorio upon their modern course, it is necessary to have a fairly clear idea of the condition of music before 1600. Our modern system of harmony was totally unknown; & so was the system of keys, and the. relations of certain important chords to one another; upon which every musical sentence is continued in our times. Musicians had not found the notion of a chord per se. Much less ~~of a~~ the relationship of one chord to another. When they first got away from pure melody their notion was not to get harmony but counterpoint. That is not a lump of sound but ~~a~~ another melody to go with the first; & they contrived that the new melody should go in certain intervals with the other, & as long as it did that they thought the whole condition of art was satisfied. At first even their closes & cadences, which correspond to stops in literature, were the old melodic cadences of the time honoured ecclesiastical scales; & it was not only as a certain unconscious feeling for harmony gained possession of musicians and caused them to modify the old scales to gain

Counterpoint carried to a high pitch of elaboration  
(even over elaboration) & then came reaction.

better effects of harmony that ~~effects~~ chord effects like our modern cadences became possible. The elaboration of contrapuntal devices was carried to a very advanced point, & in course of time the central art of combining melodic phrases for separate voices under certain fixed and simple limitations was carried to the highest pitch before the feeling for chords as a legitimate part of musical effect asserted themselves. Musicians persisted in regarding music in a horizontal light instead of a perpendicular light, & they ~~consumed~~ spent their whole energies in finding new ways of continuing independent voices. ~~But though they did not~~ But the process resulted in course of time in an ~~over~~ over elaboration of technical ingenuity, which was neither attractive to the vulgar nor of any value as real Music; & a reaction in favour of simplicity set in. But this simplicity was only possible by making use of a source of effect which had hitherto been theoretically ignored. Musical people had evidently been getting more & more accustomed to the effect of pure harmony qua harmony, which they heard as the result of the combined counterpoints, & they had been unconsciously classifying the chords in accordance with their real relationships. But there is always a great difference between a unacknowledged feeling and deliberate acceptance; there are clear indications that composers & listeners alike had long been conscious of simple chord effects before they had the courage to use them.

## Classification of chords

Palestrina b about 1528  
between 1514-1528  
d. 1594

Ecclesiastical scales against them



When the reaction came which brought Palestrina to the front; he & composers like him began applying their contrapuntal skill to the purpose of producing simply beautiful chords. Much of his success depends upon the way in which he appealed to this new sense for the effect of combined sounds as chords - & from his position to the modern position was but a short step, & it took humanity a very short time to take it. The step was only ~~one of clarity~~ that of deliberately looking at chords as chords, & clarifying them according to their key relationships. Palestrina was himself in a half & half position. He was drawn one way by his long associations with the ecclesiastical modes & another by his instinct for harmonic relationship; ~~& the strange aspects of chord succession which were produced & by~~ following the old order; & he produced successions of chords which in modern music would be almost impossible. (e.g. opening of the "Stabat Mater.") & he was drawn another way by his natural but not yet accepted instinct; & he continued to vary from one pole to the other throughout his work; the ~~art~~ achievement of the revolution was left to lesser enthusiasts. Men of less gift & genius, and men like the actors in a more familiar & more terrible revolution, ~~gifted~~ restrained by none of the sense of responsibility which attaches ~~th~~ to the great prominent representatives of an ancient regime. We must now turn again to the other aspect of the question, ~~which~~ to see

Movement for popular religious Music. Or rather for  
attracting people by popular music.

Laudi Spirituali collections of devotional music for  
use of [illeg] Laudisti originally instituted 1310[.] The  
poetry of these Laudi was originally in Italian.

Armorican [?] collection 1565

Neri 1515

Congregation of Priests of the Oratory 1540

the condition of things which led to the final change of mental attitude towards music. The prime motor seems to have been the movement of the Laudisti, who adopted simple direct and taking tunes for their hymns, in place of the elaborate art choruses which had been [2 words illeg] attract the public to religious services, & religious exercises generally; just in a similar manner to the popular hymn tunes adopted at a certain famous crisis in the last century & in our time by the Salvationists and others. These hymn tunes which they called Laudi Spirituali were adopted by Philip Neri as a feature in the performances of ~~illeg~~ plays on sacred subjects which he gave periodically with sermons & services at the Oratory of St Maria in Vallicella in Rome. The hymn tunes were infinitely more effective than the Madrigal form & in ~~illeg~~ helping to popularise the performances; & their success was the ~~penultimate~~ last step in the definite establishment of Oratorio before the planting of the actual seed of modern Oratorio.

I must however make ~~one~~ one more digression here to explain the form

Immediate source of the Musical solution

Idea of reviving the art of the Greek dramas: Music &  
all

The [Illeg]s thought they only wanted Music  
declamation no more;

in which this important experiment made its appearance. The revival of learning, which was in part owing to the troubles of the & final collapse of the Eastern Empire, brought all the best minds of the time to eager examination of the Greek literature. The moment happened to be very favourable. The general ferment of noble minds made poets & painters & musicians all eager to combine together to produce something new & glorious by the combination of their arts; & among their speculations was the hope to revive the supposed manner of performing Greek drama of all sorts. ~~As I have already pointed out to you~~ Their speculations led them to imagine that what was wanted was some way of declaiming the dialogue, in a manner which should make the music purely ancillary to the progress of the drama; & at the same time a distinct addition to the effect. Up to this time, that is the latter end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century they had no experience of our familiar form of recitative,

with [illeg] choruses of the simplest description.

Chords applied to supply support to [illeg] in  
declamation.

Caccini 1558 or 1560

died 1640

Peri late in 16<sup>th</sup> cent.

not known when he died

and they fancied the whole problem would be solved by imitating in fixed intonation the indefinite modulations of the voice in declamatory speech. As I have before pointed out to you, the world had in the course of a couple of centuries of listening to contrapuntal music arrived at some sort of vague & unacknowledged consciousness of the effect of simple chords; & all that was wanted to make the first steps of a ~~ref~~ revolution in favour of pure harmony was someone who could grip the situation, & take the simpler chords he found in the polyphonic works & classify them so as to serve as a support to the voice in musical declamation. The occasion produced plenty of men worthy of it, & the most notable amongst them were Caccini, Peri & Cavaliere. According to Peri Cavaliere was the first to ~~be~~ tackle the problem of recitative; & but the works Peri refers to in the preface to his own Euridice of 1600, are lost. They were

Early Operas

Cavaliere to the fore

His work first performed in the Oratory hence the  
name



pastorals called respectively *Il Satiro*, *La Disperazione di Fileno* & *Il Giuoco della Cieca*, which were performed the first in Florence in 1590, and the second in 1595. Peri & Caccini followed in his footsteps & both produced a musical setting of Rinuccini's *Euridice*; while Cavaliere at the same time was busy with adapting his method in precisely the same manner to a sacred subject. The same year 1600 was marked by the performance of Peri's work, which is practically the starting point of modern Opera; & Cavaliere's Representation of the Soul & the Body which is the starting point of modern Oratorio. Cavaliere's work was first in the field as it was performed in February 1600 in Rome, while Peri's *Euridice* came out in December in Florence. Further the fact that Cavaliere's work was performed for the first time in Philip Neri's Oratory, like the previous other sacred illeg dramatic works I have mentioned, & with a like purpose, gave the distinctive

The nature of Cavaliere's work

Treatment similar to Pari's & Cavaliere's in Opera

name to this form of Art. But at the same time we must not pass over the fact that Cavaliere's work is not a dramatization of a biblical or religious story, but a ~~st~~ sort of allegory; or morality. The characters are ~~the~~ such allegorical ones & personified abstractions as Soul, Body, Time, Life, Pleasure & so on; & the general plan & ~~style~~ of the ~~it~~eg work is merely that the body began in sumptuous apparel, with feathers & velvet [?] & other such signs of luxury & well being: & gradually lost its finery & came more & more down in the world, till it ended up as a miserable corpse. The soul of course on the other hand prospered & flourished like the greenest bay tree. The entire work seems to be difficult to get a sight of, as it has not been printed like Peri's & Caccini's works. But there is enough available in extracts to give clear indications of its Musical scope; & the similarity of ideas adopted by Peri & Caccini justify inference from the style of their

Choruses like the Laudi introduced into Cavaliere's  
work.

works as to the remainder. Cavaliere clearly adopted a system of Musical declamation supported by simple chords similar to that which we find in Peri's & Caccini's works; and the dignified & simple opening recitative of his work is finer than anything in Peri's. Cavaliere's Oratorio is distinguished from Peri's Opera however by the style of some choruses which have been extracted by the invaluable Burney. There are choruses in Peri's and Caccini's work also but they are very different from the style of Cavaliere's which is rhythmic simple & direct; & apparently in imitation of those same Laudi Spirituali which had formed so conspicuous a feature in the performances of sacred dramas which immediately preceded his at Philip Neri's Oratory. At the risk of losing a little time I think it is probable that you would like me to read you the directions left by Cavaliere for the performance of his work as it gives a better idea of it & its qualities & of

After Cavaliere the work carried on in other branches

the views of these experimenters in new lines of art than any description could give you. (Read Burney iv.89)

Cavaliere died before the performance of his work; & for some time there was no one prepared to carry on the development of Oratorio in any satisfactory or interesting manner. But the kindred form of Opera which was for a time supreme in attractions for the composers & poets afforded opportunities for developing points of Art which came to be very serviceable to Oratorio when a fit man came forward to carry on the story.

How the story was to be carried on will be best understood by examining the ideas of Peri & purely and simply to set the words in some fashion to a music which imitated the varying intonations of human speech. They had not the least idea of attempting any sort of passionate expression; or of any kind of tune ~~fo~~ or definite form. If

1568. 1643

Monteverde



expression came in at all it would be rather an accident, & contrary to the better judgement of the composer. Local colour might be attempted, as in the Sinfonia for 3 flutes which Thyrsis plays when he first comes on the stage in Euridice, & the declamation varies in dignity and weight in proportion to the characters of the situation. The prologue is of course rather specially dignified & weighty; but the characters do not express their sufferings or their joys in music which is the least expressive appropriate to ~~the~~ such feelings.

The music in short was as nearly as possible colourless & without direct expression. ~~It~~ And it could hardly have been otherwise. Dramatic expression was a thing as yet unknown to the world of modern Music. There had been no field for it. Composers might fairly have said that they knew not whether there was such a thing as musical dramatic expression or no. But their instincts soon taught them. And the next composer who followed Peri & Caccini no doubt made his audience start & melt with altogether new sensations. Monteverde was of a man of the revolutionary calibre.

Monteverde's daring character

A man rather of the temper of Berlioz than ~~that~~ of Wagner or Gluck; with a passion for new sensations, & utterly devoid of the reticence of responsibility. A far better Musician technically than either Peri or Caccini or Cavaliere he could write things which had some of the touches of the craftsmanship of the old order; but in a sort of defiant mood he must needs throw the rules of the old contrapuntists in their faces; & use their polyphonic methods in ways which were utterly alien to their creed introducing hitherto unheard of dissonances, & disturbing the epicurean ~~tranquil~~ repose of the ancient Gods of art with veritable cries from the heart of suffering humanity. He found again the long lost secret of the pathetic in Music, & once again ~~that~~ went to the hearts of his audience with what to them was the utmost expression of human distress. ~~that~~ The achievement by which he made the strongest impression upon his contemporaries was just that which showed in what direction art was travelling; & that the

Great features in the expressive elements introduced  
with Music

business of composers was now to transform the colourless & contourless ~~it~~ recitative by the introduction of music which was not only ancillary to the declamation, but intensified the situation, & gave them a deeper meaning. The passage by which he moved his hearers to such an extent was the little lament of the deserted Ariadne, in his first Opera Arianna. Here he entirely ~~it~~ abandoned himself ~~it~~ to the expression of the poignant distress of ~~his~~ the suffering ~~character~~ heroine & recklessly threw aside the most cherished rules of his craft & aimed at ~~con~~ convincing his hearers by overcoming & taking possession of their sensibilities. To us the passage has no very outstanding character. But we must to judge it in relation to the standard of the time – & considering the dryness and uniformity of the earlier declamatory recitativo it is not very surprising that it moved his audiences to tears, & was looked upon as one of the achievements of the age. Monteverdi also did the most excellent service by his development of the instrumental side of ~~the matter~~ the art. The

Monteverdi's Orchestra

ideas of Peri & Caccini and Cavaliere were limited to mere ~~secondary~~ subordinate accompaniment, & a bass line with the figures was generally ample to supply the instrumental accompanists with all the indication they needed.

Monteverde on the other hand ~~must needs~~ seems to have pressed into his service all the instrumentalists he could find in the ~~place~~ town where his performance was to take place, & such an extraordinary Orchestra as he is recorded to have used for his Orfeo is not to be found in the whole range of the Art. He also attempted individual effects which have passed into the most familiar usage in modern music, but which ~~startle~~ startled his hearers a good deal when they were first heard.

Monteverde's ~~illeg~~ contributions to the development of art are on the whole almost as remarkable as any man's in musical history. He extended the. range of expressive chords, ~~enlarged the~~ brought the importance of dramatic expression forcibly before the minds of musicians & auditors; gave a stir which permanently affected the development of itt instrumental music both of an independent kind, & as an accompaniment to voices; & also

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gave an indication of that most important element of known as musical form, which for the next two hundred years was destined to be the most difficult problem in the composer's duties. Peri & Caccini opened the door of the new Music, but Monteverde emphatically showed the way; & after his time composers proceeded with slow but sure steps in the direction of the great achievements of mature art. About second rate composers such as Mazzouli, [?] Kapsburger [?] and others who were the sole light of Oratorio for a while after Cavaliere's death, I think it not worth while to trouble you. The praise which has been expended upon a passage in Mazzoulli's Quersimi [???] is misplaced; & can only be endorsed by people who either have not seen it, or can't make it out. The first really important name after Cavaliere in the history of Oratorio is Carissimi, a really bright & shining genius in his way, and as important in the early history of Oratorio as Monteverde in Opera. By his time such improvements as Monteverde had made in his branch of art had spread to all other

First indications of Oratorio

Music introduced into ~~illeg~~  
the mysteries & Miracle plays

The Choral part of an ecclesiastical type at first.

Too elaborate to make a direct impression on the  
vulgar –

~~the illeg of the Laudisti~~

Change came through the movement of the Laudisti  
& the “Nuove Musische” –

Harmony as accompaniment to voices, instead of  
Madrigal forms &cet.

Cavaliere

Peri & Carrissimi devised simple [illeg], & opened the  
door of Modern Music. Monteverde brought dramatic  
expression

Oxford version

branches of Art, & ~~Oratorio took~~ in consequence the standard of Oratorio was very much in advance of that of Cavaliere. Moreover the feverish eagerness to be born of finding themselves in a new path had given place to better balanced moderation in use of the means of art. The earlier disciples of the "new music" thought that everything was to be done by their methods, & that the old arts of counterpoint which had been the glory of all the great masters up to the end of the previous century were quite superfluous to them. In fact their treatment of choral effect had been most extraordinarily crude & imperfect, if we consider that they must have constantly ~~it~~ heard the masterpieces of the greatest period of polyphonic writing. ~~it~~ The part writing of Peri & Carissimi is simply infantile. They could scarcely have written as simple four-part harmony exercise correctly, & ~~it~~ Cavaliere was but little better. (Notice crudities in "Fate festa") ~~it~~ Mazzouli [???], though blest by some historians with honour for choral works which they probably have never seen, is just as bad. Monteverde was brought up in the old traditions & learnt his counterpoint properly, but the revolutionary impulse possessed him too fiercely to admit of his using the technique & manners of ~~old~~ the older school with a quiet mind; &

Carissimi 1604? or 1612 died 1674

Carissimi first to combine old & new counterpoint &  
harmony

The process of modifying the ecclesiastical for the purposes of harmony had been going on for some time: & went on steadily getting more & more like our modern major & minor scales. By Carissimi's time they were ~~very~~ verging on complete adaptation & there was already a great difference since Monteverde

Writes effectively for Chorus

Feebly for instruments

much of his work has decidedly a crude & immature effect. But in estimating this it must not be forgotten back to the tradition of the old ecclesiastical scale is still hampered composers formed from arriving at a perfect treatment of the Harmony because their instinct for harmonic relations was frequently brought into opposition to the scales which they had been accustomed to it from their earliest years, & were as it were in the blood.

But by Carissimi's time things were beginning to settle down & find their level; & he was the first master who was not only well enough schooled in the old method to write first rate choral music, but the first in whom the old & new school find any chance of assimilating. He is the first master who gives us the impression that he knows what he is aiming at, & convincing in that he aimed rightly. He could write freely and richly ~~for 6 & 8 voices~~ for voices from 4 to 6 & 8 forms as in his motets & a few choruses in his oratorios; but he was quite equally at home in the new brand of expressive recitative and & arioso & ~~it~~ grouped his harmonies with much greater security than any master who preceded him. He also had some idea of using instruments, though it must be confessed the general sense of instrumental in effect was still extremely backward, and composers yet for a long time were very helpless in instrumental expression. The result is that his Oratorios occupy a very important position in musical history, & we shall do well

Plan of his Oratorios

Traditional uses of the Church

Historicus

to consider them in detail. In the first place the design of the book or libretto is decidedly interesting & noticeable, & shows its connection with the ecclesiastical traditions. I must call your attention to a traditional use in the Roman church ceremonial which has lasted as in great Protestant works. At certain seasons of the year it has been customary to divide the reading of certain portions of the gospels between several people with a view to giving it something of a dramatic effect. One ~~preset~~ priest takes the words which belong to the actual evangelist, another the words of Christ, ~~the~~ and the choir or in their absence some other individual words of the turba or crowd. ~~Heg~~ I shall have to refer to this again later in connection with German Passion Music; in Carissimi's work the tradition is apparent also in the distribution of the characters who take part. If we take for instance his *Judicium Salmonis* [???]. After a short preliminary Sinfonia for instruments "Historicus" [???] the story teller, like the evangelist in the Church ceremonial, makes his appearance & summons all people from the ends of the earth to come & see the glory and wisdom of King Solomon. Then come in the two women the first of whom makes a complaint to Solomon that

(Wrangle of the women before Solomon. & cet  
describe)

Illustration.



the other woman has stolen her living child, & put her dead one in its place. Coll: lecture p.16. xA-B at bottom of page 16. Similarly in Jephthah – p7 Historicus describing the situation. Jephthah promising to offer to God whatever first meets him on his return, if he triumphs over the children of Ammon. Descriptive chorus & solo illustrating the fight. The chorus representing of the wailing of the children of Ammon. The daughter coming out to meet him with cymbals & rejoicing. ~~illeg~~ Historicus ~~explains~~ calls notice to Jephthah's misery. Dialogue between Jephthah & his daughter. She accepts her fate and makes an ~~illeg~~ eloquent lamentation; & the work ends with a dignified solid & thoroughly artistic chorus "Plorate filii Israel."

In these things you can scarcely fail to see the great stride that has been made in mastery of resource and expression. The much wider ~~illeg~~ scope of & reach of Carissimi's ~~illeg~~ separate movements. The clearness of the progressions the greater definiteness of formality, the ~~better~~ improvement in the plan & style of expression. All these things

## Compare Montverde & Carissimi

Carissimi  
Expression  
Counterpoint & chord writing  
Form  
Harmony.

Stradella

Stradella 1645-1678  
Speculative both

Stradella. Instrumental music  
Chord writing  
Character[?] form

are extremely marked in contrasting Carissimi & his predecessors – even Monteverde. Monteverde had greater intensity & perhaps more force than Carissimi but Carissimi was better balanced[,] more sure of his footing – a better craftsman, & at the same time not without decided poetical & dramatic feeling. After his work the continuance of expression as a feature of the New Music was secure; & so also was the position of Chorus at least as an accomplished fact. Close upon the heels of Carissimi comes the most romantic figure in the history of Music. The familiar story of the love of Stradella for the lady Hortensia, & of the relentless hatred of the Venetian noblemen, whose paid assassins followed the ill-fated doomed composer from town to town till they finally succeeded in stabbing him in the street is possibly a good deal of it fictitious, & coloured by popular excitability, but at any rate the tragic story has an important inference. It would not have such a rich colour if public interest had not been powerfully aroused by his works. College lecture X B-C pp 21 D 21. 22 23.

Ill luck of the Italians want of tenacity of purpose

Stradella's early disappearance from the world it~~leg~~ marks the point at which one of the most extraordinary changes imaginable took place in the history of Oratorio. Hitherto we have seen expression, form and choral effect all healthily progressing; when on a sudden the whole aspect of things changes, & the sceptre which the Italians seemed to hold so securely passed from their grasp for ever. It is the same ill luck with them in every department of Music. They began all the best lines of art – of Opera – Oratorio, Cantata, Sonata, Italy it~~leg~~ was the seed plot. But some fatal gift has brought it about that in every department Italy has failed to bring these great forms to the highest perfection, & if some other nation had not stepped in, & as it were swallowed all that Italians had done so far – or to speak more consistently – had not taken the young plants & reared them in a more vigorous & bracing climate the story of the development of modern Musical art forms would not be worth telling. The feature which marks at once the Italian spirit & nature of Italian weakness in Oratorio is the sudden & surprising

Chorus [illeg] in Italian Oratorio

Collapse of Italian Art

Cause

disappearance of Choruses from Italian Oratorios. Chorus as I have pointed out to you is one of the most important features of Oratorio - & so far among Italian composers it bid fair to develop into something first rate; & yet suddenly the development ceased altogether - ~~& chorus thenceforward almost disappears entirely from Italian Oratorio~~ & in a short while Italian Oratorio had entirely changed its character, & became too utterly worthless for more than regretful mention.

The change shows itself also in ~~others~~ other ways. Italian style up to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century had a noble dignity & warmth & richness, ~~it~~ <sup>its</sup> solidity & above all noble dignity. In ~~the~~ a short short space the face of the world is changed - & ~~through a certain run of department enabled~~ though the tradition of a great school gave the popular composers a certain manner & deportment which is superficially impressive the spirit is wanting. Formality takes the place of design. Variety of feeling takes the place of self respect; an empty elegance ~~of~~ takes the place of feeling. & popularity ~~not art is the guiding light of composers.~~ It was the fatal gift of beauty that did the damage. Blest with a language that was made to sing, & conditions of

## Development of solo singing



climate & organisation which seem specially favourable to producing the most beautiful voices the nation yielded to the force of such seduction and the public became the slave of these singers.

The causes of such a crisis at the particular time when it happened are not hard to find. Before the so called invention of the "New Music" solo singing of any great extent had been practically impossible.

Musicians had cultivated the art of pure ~~pop~~ polyphonic Choral singing to a very high pitch but they had no idea of accompaniment, or how to manage one; & without accompaniment solo singing on a large scale was impossible. But the invention of the new music put a new complexion on the matter.

~~The solo singer was the centre of interest~~ & brought the solo singer into hitherto unknown prominence.

Carissimi himself was noted as a singer, & gave great attention to the art of solo singing. So also was his daughter - & once fairly started it solo singing developed incredibly fast; & public taste was quickly drawn more & more exclusively towards it. The development of the harmonic system, of harmonic form, & our modern system of scales was all in the singer's favour, & everything

Influence of solo singers

conspired to bring them to the front. Their music was much easier to listen to & understand than fine choral music, & demanded less intelligence: & it also required less intelligence in a singer to draw the public by vocal display than by artistic expression. Mere technical gifts accordingly became predominant. The public ceased to care for anything but ~~the~~ solo singing, & composers were quite willing to fall in with their views. It was vastly much easier to ~~the~~ write a formal air with flourishes & roulades to show off the singers than it was to write a solid big chorus, & it took less trouble to perform. So Oratorios ceased to be works of art, or to have any meaning or artistic purpose; & became ~~the~~ mere collections of Airs of one set pattern for popular singers – Distributed not according to dramatic purpose but in such a manner as Signor this & Signor that desired. Many Oratorios had no choruses at all. Sometimes a chorus was put in for respectability's sake, or just for a little ~~vacuity~~ variety. But they are always of small importance

Alessandro Scarlatti  
1659. 1725

Handel following Italian tradition & cet

and it is possible the public talked all the while they were going on. This is the more remarkable, because some of the ~~illeg~~ composers who wrote Oratorios such as Caldani [???] & Leo ~~Alessandro Scarlatti~~ who were really great masters of choral writing. But they reserved their powers for more fitting opportunities. About the great Alessandro Scarlatti we are in the dark— we know he wrote Oratorios, but I believe that not a single complete one remains. ~~complete~~ In nearly all his work that remains there is a stamp of the greatness & originality; but we have nothing but inference to guide us in the extracting what he did for Oratorio, & that inference is not favourable to him. For we are drawn to the conclusion that though he did not write such empty stuff as most other Italian oratorio composers ~~of~~ about his time, he still was one of the leaders in the fatal ~~error~~ mistake of abandoning Oratorios to the tender mercies of those spoilt children of art the successful solo singers. Now comes the ~~illeg~~ curious question. How was it that Handel who was fully half if not more an Italian composer made chorus such a preponderating feature in his Oratorios. Handel's career of success dates from his Italian journey; when he ~~adapted~~ submitted himself with singular readiness to the fascination of the

Handel

Italian Oratorios

Italian style - & is completely absorbed in it for a year or two's space all that was good & serviceable in the work of Italian composers up to his time. The problem is complicated by a curious fact; which adds strong confirmation to the facts I have mentioned to you in connection with Italian taste for solo singing. Before Handel left Germany he had written a large work on the lines of Oratorio with plenty of good vigorous freely written choruses in it. When he went to Italy he wrote Oratorios for Italian audiences; & he showed at once the practical common sense part (directly allied to ~~the~~ what I take to mean the wisdom of the serpent) which characterised him throughout life. His first attempt was the oratorio called the Resurrection which he wrote for performance in Rome in 1708. In this there are actually only two choruses - & they are both of them of the most obvious & chordy kind - & the last is little better than a light dance tune. In his second oratorio "Il Trionfo della Tempo e della Verita" written in the same year he was still wiser in his generation. There are no choruses at all. We must therefore evidently look elsewhere for the ~~sources of his great choral achievements~~ immense development of the choral

Germany



part of his English Oratorios of some years later. I must confess ~~it~~ as a parting word on the Italians that the influence of their actual style is very strong on Handel even in his Choruses to the last: but to the nature & grand ~~devel~~ development of them, the powerful choral expression which he developed, the Italians had next to nothing to do. The honour falls to other nations.

We naturally turn first to Handel's own country of Germany. The influences he received in the impressionable time of his youth were the fruits of German traditions; & to them we ~~it~~ are safe in availing a great part of the origin of Handels supreme Choral triumphs.

Circumstances had caused German sacred art ~~it~~ to take a very characteristic line. Germans looked to the Italians as the head Musical nation of the world; but till ~~th~~ after the earliest years of the eighteenth century they still maintained a powerful & most interesting individuality. And in order to understand its nature & the style of their art we must take a long step back ~~it~~ to look at the conditions of Music in Germany which made German Music what it was before Handel & Bach.

Germany took a long while to come to the front  
[pencil continuation too faint to decipher]

The sources of the sacred Music used in plays & in services in Germany similar to those in Italy. [ Coll. lectures. P.29 \*E – F

The fascination which the story of the Passion exerted upon them to the exclusion of almost every other subject.

The actual source of their characteristic treatment of the subject was the traditional Custom [?] I have before alluded to in connection with Carissimi's Oratorios. But I must revive your memories about the particulars & details. The device was adapted from early times in the middle ages especially in Holy Weeks, and though it varies a little in details in different uses the principle is the same everywhere. One priest represented the evangelist and recited [?] the purely narrative portion with regular cadences specially allotted to him. Another priest took the words of Christ; with a distinctly different form of Musical recitation, & another took the part of the "turba". Sometimes other individuals were represented by other priests, & often the utterances of the crowd were allotted to the Choir. Those of you who are familiar with Bach's great Passion Music will easily realize the similarity of the

2<sup>nd</sup> lecture must end with Schutz in the College  
version which is p.36

Begin p 35 RCM lecture

Handel's first "Passion Music"

management of the plan of the story in his work. But at present we must consider the early Germans & their views about it. The ceremony was evidently recognized as very impressive, & it was retained by the reformed Church in Germany, & came to have a much more special stress laid on it than in Italy. Composers applied themselves to developing the Musical portion of the ceremony, & continuing a distinct work of art on similar lines, which soon came to be known definitively as "Passion Music." It will be as well to run rapidly over the history of this interesting form of art.

Johann Walther [3 Greek letters] p 31. X G pp. 32.33.34.35.35.37 to H on p 38.

Hege

And in fact the same year that saw old Keiser's experiment also saw the appearance of young Handel's first large attempt at sacred music; which was also a Passion according to John; written in the fashion then accepted in the German Musical world; dealing with the plan just as Johann Sebastian Bach did a little later. Handel at the time was 19; and ~~his~~ he was engaged at Keisers Hamburg theatre; having occupied the post of second violin ~~of first violin~~ at first, & then risen

Handel's Passion

Chorus writing

to the more distinguished position of “cembalist”, or accompanist at the harpsichord. He had as yet had but moderate acquaintance with Italian music, & the work therefore fairly represents the ~~amount of~~ effect which his purely German education had had upon him. The work as a whole is better expressed than what I have seen of Keisers. There are no such crudities as one constantly meets in that worthy’s works. But at the same time it is not ~~it is~~ quite the strong well rounded Handel that we know. But there is a very important point to note, & that is the quantity of choral writing in the work. There are in fact a considerable number of choruses some of them ~~showing~~ containing plenty of that vigorous clear and well accented kind of counterpoint which was in later life one of his marked characteristics. So here ~~it is~~ we ~~have or~~ have proof positive that the German traditions in which he was brought up were among the influences which led to his great choral achievement in his mature Oratorios. As I have before pointed out when he went to Italy a few years later he found his powers of chorus writing were not valued, & he wrote Oratorios almost

Handel writing Operas principally for some 26 years  
or so, before his Oratorio career began



without Chorus of any kind. But under more favourable conditions in a Country which delighted in Choral effect he ~~illeg~~ [illeg] his [illeg], & flowered [?] in a choral glory which has never ~~again~~ since been surpassed.

But before Handel carried the Oratorio to its highest climax his great contemporary Johann Sebastian Bach put the top stress [?] on the development of the form of Passion Music.

Bach's career & cet. P 43. Coll. lecture K 43 pp. 43.44.45.46.47

The period of Handel's Oratorio writing ~~illeg~~ overlaps the first appearance of the famous Matthäus Passion of Bach by just a little. Handel came to England in 1711 with a great reputation already made as an Opera writer. The first Opera he wrote for this country, Rinaldo, established his fame without question as the greatest Opera writer of his age; & his success gave a permanent turn to his career. With rare deviations he continued to make Opera the main object of his existence for some 26 or 27 years. The first interruption was the time when he was engaged as Capelmeister to the Duke of Chandos

Inter Interruption in the Operatic period mainly in  
favour of the Choral works which are on the lines of  
his later Oratorios & in one way or another led up to  
them.

Esther

English traditions in respect of theatrical musical  
performances

at Cannons; & while he was there he wrote the work which is commonly known as his first English Oratorio under the name of Esther; & another secular work on similar plan known as Acis & Galatea. Now it is a quaintly paradoxical fact that the so called Esther Oratorio was at first neither intended as an Oratorio, nor to be called Esther. That thorough going Handel enthusiast Chrysander has published some facts that he has come across in his careful investigations which make it ~~illeg~~ almost certain that the work was described at first as Haman and Mordecai, a Masque. Now this discovery of his leads us to at least one of the sources of Handel's Choral ~~triumph~~ achievements; and I must go back a little in English Musical history to trace it. Different nations have had from early times distinctly ~~forms~~ different ~~illeg~~ tastes for Musical theatrical performances in which Music formed a prominent feature. The Italians ~~like~~ at first liked a purely dramatic representation; the French always something which comprised a good deal of dancing & spectacular display. With the English the Masque was the characteristic form of entertainment.

## Masques

### The English Opera of Purcell's time

In illustration of the character of the masque chorus take "With drooping wings".

A Masque was rather an artificial kind of affair, comprising a good deal of allegory, supernatural elements, conceits, fancies & so forth. Not much of a story usually, & containing more literary skill than studies of humanity. In this kind of entertainment ~~there were~~ offered special opportunities for Chorus, & certain it is that the short lived English Opera ~~which~~ of Purcell's time, which is ~~clearly~~ closely related in its literary features to the old English Masques was distinguished from the Operas of all other countries by the profusion of Choruses with which ~~illeg illeg~~ the work was filled. In Purcell's Dido & Aeneas there are at least 10 choruses, & in King Arthur his largest work of the kind no less than 15. And these choruses are not all of the simple & direct kind we expect to meet with in Opera, but some of them highly ~~illeg~~ elaborate & contrapuntal; & expressive as well. X

This condition of things accounts for & points to a decided taste for Choral Music among the English people even before the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. English Opera collapsed when Purcell died, simply from lack of composers & lack of encouragement. Handel's Operas were written for Italian singers & of the Italian type.

Handel follows the line of the Masques

Esther

But directly he had a commission to write an English work on the pattern of the Masque he introduced numbers of fine Choruses quite after the manner of his later Oratorios - & as I have pointed out Chrysander has put the work in a totally new light by proving that it was originally called a masque.

The history of Esther is important to our argument, so I must trace it to you as closely as I can.

We know nothing of the impression it made upon the Duke of Chandos's guests at the first performance; all we know is that it was laid aside for full 10 years. In 1731 it was taken up independently of Handel by Bernard Gates master of the Children of the Chapel Royal, & performed by them with action at his house. In 1732 someone else advertised a performance of it, calling it Esther an Oratorio or Sacred drama; & it seems probable that these performances moved Handel to perform it himself, and a notice came out in April 19, 1732 - read pages 10 & 11 College lecture M to O.

The success of Esther when it was revived in 1732 led to Handel's doing more in the same way & he revived Acis & Galatea also: which was also performed with scenery & action.

Curious instance of the influence of purely external affairs upon the history of art

Immediate causes of Handel taking Oratorio performances



This also being a success turned his businesslike mind to a new ~~illeg illeg~~ point of profitableness which such performances offered. He was renting a theatre for performance of Opera. But in ~~Lent~~ in those days Opera was not allowed in Lent; so he struck upon the brilliant idea of using his theatre for the performance of sacred & serious works of the same calibre as Esther & Acis, without Action. And the fruit of this brilliant idea was Deborah, the first of the Oratorios work which he wrote deliberately as an English Oratorio. And this work is an unquestioned Oratorio, & what is more it is clearly based on the same ~~design~~ system, & was used for the same purposes as Esther & Acis & Galatea; & it is also on precisely the same lines as his later Oratorios; ~~illeg~~ both as regards the system of treatment of the subject, and also in the distribution of Overture, recitatives & Arias, & great Choruses. The immediate ~~illeg illeg~~ precursor of his Oratorios then are the English Masques in their latest & most developed form as represented by the first version of Esther & Acis & Galatea. ~~illeg~~ The cause of his

Points notable about Israel

Borrowings

His object in writing them was to supply the place of the Operas at his theatre at a time when Operas with action were forbidden; & this partly accounts for the plan's being so like that of the Operas, with Choruses superadded.

(If there is time read p. 13 from XR) If not take p.14 +S & pp 15.16 to T on p.18

There are two things specially worth taking into consideration about Israel in Egypt: & we can take the least pleasant one first. Saul & Israel ~~make~~ mark at once the climax & the turning point of Handel's singular habits of patching. In Deborah I pointed out to you that Handel had inserted several numbers from earlier works of his own: in Saul & Israel in Egypt he went further, & adapted works of other peoples. The borrowings in Saul were mostly from a Te Deum of Unio's, [?] and were limited in quantity. In Israel in Egypt he borrowed wholesale. One whole chorus from an Organ Canzona by Kerl [?], ~~another~~ parts of others from a Serenata by Stradella, ~~the~~ parts of others including the well known figure of the Symphony of The Lord is a man of war from Esio, [?] & a great ~~quant~~ quantity from a Magnificat ~~which~~ the MS of

Israel borrowings

which has the name of Erba upon it, but is thought by some people to be an early work of Handels. These singular appropriations of other mens works emphasize the position of Handel as a practical business man, & show how up to this point he looked at his art as much from the point of a Concert giver as & from that of an inspired & earnest composer. It seems strange that a man who was so ready with ideas should have thought it worth while to borrow. The circumstances fact in is explained by the excessively busy life he led: it is in which he was obliged to economise not only his time but his powers.

The other & more pleasant fact in connection with Israel is that it ~~is the~~ comprises the greatest proportionate amount & quality of Chorus writing of any Oratorio in existence. Handel was clearly growing strongly conscious of his immense powers as a Chorus writer, & up to this point no doubt his audiences had appreciated the effects he produced. He probably thought a Choral work on a scale never before attempted would make a great impression. & accordingly put out all his power in Chorus The sequel proved that he was mistaken. This greatest of choral works was in his own time one of his worst failures. After the first performance Handel had to insert

One of the notices says “The Oratorios will be shortened & intermixed with songs”

Messiah

Note the connection between the Messiah & Passions

selections of Italian Aires for solo singers to try & persuade the public to listen to his work; & played Concertos on the Organ between the parts. But it was of no avail - & Israel was only heard 9 times before Handel died (1759). This was of course a lesson to Handel - & in all his later Oratorios ~~he~~ the balance between Soli & Chorus is more closely kept. Chorus maintains a very conspicuous position in all his Oratorios, but never again attains such a truly colossal development as in Israel.

The year after Israel appeared Handel's Opera career came to an end. Then he seemed to take a more serious view of Oratorio art. The very next after Israel is his masterpiece the Messiah; which was first performed in Dublin on September 14, 1741. Truly a great & memorable day in the history of art. And try how they will learned & acute critics will never be able to show themselves wiser than the ~~gr~~ general mass of humanity by discovering any work of Handels to be finer. All I ~~shall~~ shall attempt to do out of the common is to point out to you that it is the one actually & purely religious work among Handel's Oratorios; & the one ~~b~~ in which his feelings were most vividly engaged; & consequently the one in which all ~~the noblest qualities of his mind~~ his noblest faculties were called in

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into action. All the other Oratorios are dramatized or politicised stories of various heroes & heroines of Sacred history. The Messiah is unique among Oratorios; & bears a kinship on the one side to the traditional Passion Music of his own land, while on the other side it is a sort of glorified Anthem; & it contains at most of the best features of both forms of art.

After the Messiah followed Samson 1743, Joseph 1744, Belshazzar 1745, Judas Maccabeus 1746, Joshua 1747, Solomon 1748, Theodora 1749, Jeptha 1751. His eyes troubled him much while writing Jeptha - & soon after he had an operation for "illeg illeg", after which he lost his sight. He died in 1759.

With Handel ends the great climax of Oratorio. Directly after he died the Art collapsed. Partly because no one could wield the bow of Ulysses, & partly because the attention of composers was drawn away to the new field of Instrumental Music. For ~~illeg~~ half a century & more composers gave all their energies to this department of art, & it was not till Instrumental form, & the new art of Orchestration had arrived at an advanced state of development that they could be combined with the old form of Oratorio & [illeg] to reawaken it to a new lease of life.

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